

# SPEAK



SPEAK is a publication mainly for women. It deals with topics of interest to all people we hope, but especially those which are useful and interesting to women. So, SPEAK is about women:- their work in factories, homes and com-

munities; their lives and problems, including their health, transport, housing, etc. Many of these problems apply to all people, but we are interested in the particular way they affect women, and the way in which women

can and do respond to them. One way of raising these issues is through writing. We want this publication to reach women, and express their problems, thoughts and issues.

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A WORKSHOP ORGANISED BY WOMEN WAS HELD OVER THE WEEKEND OF THE 17 AND 18 APRIL, 1982. ITS MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO LOOK AT THE NEED TO ORGANISE WOMEN AND HOW TO GO ABOUT THIS. ABOUT 50 WOMEN FROM AROUND DURBAN WERE PRESENT, SOME BROUGHT THEIR CHILDREN WITH THEM. MOST PEOPLE STAYED OVERNIGHT.

On Saturday the programme started with an ice-breaking session. Then a paper was read and a slide tape programme shown. Both of these were followed by discussion.

On Sunday discussion groups were organised. Each time we broke up into small groups, each group had a co-ordinator for that particular discussion. These small groups made it possible for everybody to share their ideas, and learn from one another. The weekend closed with an evaluation of the workshop.



## THE ICE-BREAKING SESSION

What do you best enjoy doing?  
What do you like most about yourself?  
What do you do?  
What is your favourite colour?

With much laughing and joking people briefly discussed questions such as these. In this way, everybody met one another in a very short time. A friendly and relaxed spirit was set for the weekend!



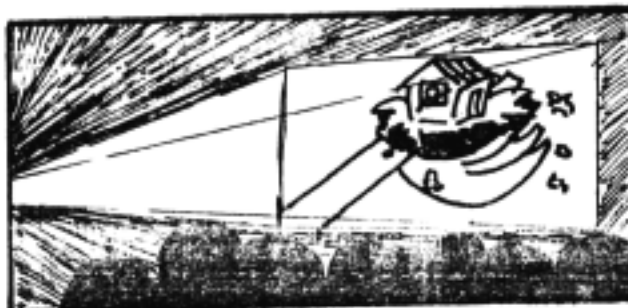
## THE PAPER: MRS APRILS LIFE

A short paper was read to the group. It was about a day in the life of a working woman. It described the problems and frustrations of being a wife, mother and factory worker.

We then broke up into small groups to discuss our own and other women's problems. In this way there was a chance for everybody to speak and share ideas.

We found that there are common problems facing women, like discrimination in many ways at

work. We talked about how these problems are not easy to overcome because women are kept fully occupied both at home and at work. There is little time for anything else.



## SLIDE-TAPE SHOW

The slide-tape show took us into a South American community who go through the same kinds of daily frustrations most of us in South Africa experience. We saw the problems of cramped living conditions, bad transport, low wages and lack of child care centers. We saw the familiar situation of bosses' only interest being profit and ignoring workers' problems. We also saw how problems were overcome by all people getting together and organising to change things. In the discussions which followed people spoke about our need to do the same thing. The slide-tape show is available from Diakonia (312609).

In the evening we relaxed and enjoyed ourselves. We had the chance to learn more about each other and share experiences.

## LEARNING ABOUT AREAS

We broke up into groups again. Each group had a co-ordinator who discussed the area from which she came and the most serious problems the people faced there. This gave others a chance to hear about the conditions in various parts of Durban itself. People talked of the need to work together to change these conditions. The co-ordinators reported back to the group at large. This gave everyone the opportunity to hear something about everyone else's area.

## EVALUATION

We all had the opportunity to comment on the weekend. It was hoped that people would leave the workshop with new energy to continue organising in their areas or begin to participate in doing so. We had the chance to make old friendships grow and develop new ones.

TO HELP US ACHIEVE OUR AIMS AS SET OUT IN THE INTRODUCTION TO THIS NEWSLETTER WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO :-

- \* LET US KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO READ ABOUT;
- \* SEND IN ARTICLES ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR AREA;
- \* SEND US ANY STORIES, PICTURES OR POEMS THAT YOU AND OTHER WOMEN WRITE OR LIKE.

SEND THEM TO : **SPEAK COLLECTIVE**  
76 WALMER AVENUE,  
DURBAN.

WOMEN ALL OVER THE WORLD SUFFER MANY COMMON PROBLEMS. HERE IS A STORY BY A WOMAN IN AMERICA WHO DESCRIBES HER SITUATION - ONE WHICH IS SIMILAR TO MANY WOMEN HERE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

## I Just Don't Know If I Can Make It

Colleen McNamara

...That's what I find myself saying almost every night before I fall asleep. I'm a woman alone with an infant son, trying to exist on welfare. Before the baby was born I used to find myself crying a lot because I just couldn't get the money together to buy things, like a crib and clothes, that the baby would need. I guess like any mother I wanted the best for my child, but now my tears are being shed for things much more serious. I am 21 years old and my background was far from comfortable and stable. I was raised in a small apartment over a liquor warehouse in a big city. We couldn't afford hot running water because my Mom paid the utilities and she had to think of every little way to save. She would turn the hot water heater on once a week and we would all have a bath. The rest of the week we'd heat water on the stove. At night we'd all have to stay in one room to save electricity. Our food was always simple and our clothes usually made-over hand-outs.

My parents broke up when I was small because my Dad was slowly turning to drinking as a way of life. I guess it was hard for him to have to watch his family live like that even though he was working. He was a high-school dropout and an unskilled labourer, so the jobs he could find didn't pay enough to raise a family on. When Dad left, Mom started working full-time as a nurse's aide at night, and by the time I was a teenager I was practically on my own. We didn't see much of her and the temptations of being on my own started getting me into trouble.

Through these years I've met many a social worker and parole officer through the juvenile authorities. At 15 I had a job as a nurse's aide after school and on weekends. I've always worked and



worked hard; that illusion that welfare recipients are lazy can't be proved by me.

The reason I told you about my background was to let you see that being poor and not having everything I want is not new to me. And yet the way I live now is like a constant nightmare. As I started to say earlier, I used to cry a lot before the baby was born because I couldn't get him the best of everything; now I'm happy if he's got pyjamas to keep him warm, no matter what they look like. Now my tears are shed for a much more urgent need - food. According to the county, I'm allowed \$14 worth of food stamps for two weeks - that's \$7 a week, \$1 a day. Last week when I got my food stamps I bought all the baby's food for two weeks. That way when the money runs out at least the baby will have food. The other foods I bought were rice, beans, bread catsup, potatoes, four pork chops, two quarts of milk, one box of cereal, and two cans of soup. My bill was \$11.00. That means I'm left with \$3.00 worth of stamps for the other thirteen days. That

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\$3,00 will have to pay for milk, bread, and butter as they're needed. Right now my baby's on vegetables, cereal, and formula. God only knows what I'm going to do when he starts eating meat, fruit and fruit juice.



Please understand that I want to get back to a job as soon as I can, but it's impossible to get employment and the government cut its funds for training programmes. I feel like I'm on a dead end street. I'm cursed for being on welfare and yet the very people who condemn me won't hire me so I can get on my feet again. Is it so hard to understand why the urge to steal is becoming stronger and stronger? I receive \$148, a month from welfare to pay for rent, food, clothes, transportation, telephone and other things such as soap, Purex, laundromat fees, deodorant, toothpaste, and toilet paper. Maybe a lot of you people take these things for granted, but when you're making a budget out of \$148, there's many a time when newspaper or gift box paper is used until the real thing can be afforded.

Many people condemn poor people for being apathetic about what's happening in the country. But many of us cannot afford TV's and even a dime for the newspaper is sometimes more than we can spare. Is it any wonder that many a time we don't know what's happening in Washington and in other parts of the world? But just ask us about the things that are happening around us and we could fill a book. Ask us about that tragic battle that roars within us as we desperately try to save our faith in God while all the world is turning into a hell for us, and we are being made involuntary martyrs

to a country no longer believe in. Ask us about the cops in our neighbourhoods and about the schools. For God's sake, America, put down your newspapers and look around you.

Is it any wonder that the health of poor people is so bad? We can't afford balanced meals three times a day and our nerves are shot from being under so much mental strain. My body is so choked up with fear for me and my son's future, and the future of all other people like us, I can hardly breathe. And now we are burdened with the additional threat of the medical programme being stopped. Many old people have already died

because they were told they could no longer stay in nursing homes when the government cut their funds. They had no families and no place else to go, so they just died. If things keep up this way, soon America will have a mortality rate as high as the so-called uncivilised, underdeveloped parts of the world.



drawing by Melba Kintony

Of all things in America, poverty is the only one that knows no prejudices. Poor people of all races, creeds, colours, and age groups are slowly being wasted away. I am white, but as the times get worse and worse my existence seems to be threatened as much as any minority group, not because I'm white, but solely because I'm poor. I believe working together for change can help all of us. At least I hope it can because that's our last hope. Otherwise I just don't know if I can make it.

I JUST DON'T KNOW IF I CAN MAKE IT


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Play is an important activity for children. It is through playing that children can develop their creativity and independence. Toys add more stimulation to the child's environment. Through learning to handle their toys, children gain greater self-confidence. This helps them to feel able to take greater control of their lives when they are older. But many children do not have the chance to develop through play. It may be because there is nowhere for them to play, or because their families cannot afford to buy toys for them, or both.


## TOY LIBRARY IN TONGAAT

For the 12000 people living in Tongaat South this is one of their many problems. Tongaat South is the most densely populated area in Tongaat with many people living in flats. There is no place where mothers can safely leave their young children to play on their own. Added to this, the lack of day-care facilities means that mothers have to stay at home with their children. This means that both the mother and the child suffer in their own ways. The mothers have to stay at home to look after the children. This prevents them from going out to work. The children have neither an exciting environment, nor any toys to make their play more interesting and enjoyable.


Because of these problems, a small group of women decided to look into the need for day-care facilities in the area. These women held a survey to find out how many mothers in Tongaat South would make use of day-care facilities. The results of this survey showed that 50% of the mothers were willing to make use of creche facilities. They would then be able to find work to bring more, much needed, money into their families.




A half-day workshop was held so that the interested women in Tongaat South could come together and look at the possibility of starting a creche. They realised that a creche is a long-term project and that it had to be worked towards for the future.




A day-care committee and a fund-raising committee were established to work on organising the creche. The day-care committee saw the need to plan something which would be useful to the mothers and their children, while the fund raising committee was raising the money to get the creche off the ground.



So the idea of having a toy library was taken up. The toy library was established and has now been running for about one month. It is open for about 2 hours a day, twice a week, and the children loan toys for a week at a time, at a cost of 5 cents each. The toys being collected for this purpose will also be able to be used in the future creche.



A toy library can be very valuable in a community. It provides toys for children to play with. In play children can learn to co-operate and share with others.



The toy library also gives mothers some time free from having to give constant attention to their children. Possibly, in the future, mothers can come together to decide how best to use the potential which the toy library provides to help improve their present situation.



# HEALTH

## AS PEOPLE WE FACE MANY HEALTH PROBLEMS

HEALTH? WELL...

GOOD THING I ASKED FOR THE WHOLE DAY OFF-WORK!

We wait for hours in queues at the clinic.

I DIDN'T KNOW THE PILL MEANT CHOOSING BETWEEN HEADACHES OR BABIES!

At the family-planning clinics, all they are interested in doing is ensuring that you don't fall pregnant at any cost. The bad side-effects on our health, or the dangers of different contraceptives, are not talked about.

YES DOCTOR!

Doctors often treat us like children. They don't tell us what is wrong with us, nor how we can prevent it from happening again. Owing to such a shortage of hospitals and doctors each patient only gets to see the doctor for about 2 mins!

BUT DOCTOR, YOU HAVEN'T EXPLAINED...

SORRY, NO TIME!

All in all our health system is costly and unsatisfactory.

- ★ OVERCROWDED HOSPITALS
- ★ SHORTAGE OF CLINICS
- ★ TRANSPORT COSTS
- ★ TIME SPENT
- ★ SHORTAGES OF DOCTORS AND NURSES
- ★ POORLY PAID NURSES
- ★ MEDICINES



## AS WOMEN WE FACE MANY ADDED HEALTH PROBLEMS

CHANGE OF LIFE?

WONDER WHAT THESE SULPHUR FUMES ARE DOING TO MY UNBORN CHILD?

PERIOD PAINS AND BACKACHE

FORCED CONTRACEPTION AT THE FACTORY

AND MANY MORE...

In our newsletter we want to have a series of articles on health. In most cases, we will focus particularly on women's health.

In the first of our series, we want to look at methods of contraception, taking into account that no birth-control methods presently available are

completely safe.

We will look at the different methods and the pros and cons of each. It is only when women have enough information about these things that we will be in a better position to choose and decide what is best for ourselves.